

A B R I E F
E X H O R T A T I O N
T O T H E
Holy Communion.
W I T H T H E
N A T U R E a n d M E A S U R E
O F
P R E P A R A T I O N
Concerning it.

Fitted to the Meanest Capacities.

By WILLIAM ASSHETON, D. D.
Late Rector of *Beckenham* in *Kent*,
and Chaplain to his Grace the
Duke of O R M O N D.

L O N D O N:

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TO THE
INHABITANTS

Of the Parish of

Beckenham in Kent.

HAVING given you directions in some former papers, not only for your Daily Devotion, but also how to observe and sanctify the Lord's Day ; I shall next proceed to instruct you concerning the Holy Communion : how you may comfortably receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But before I attempt that task (so great is the neglect of this holy Institution) I find it necessary to admonish you of your duty in these two instances.

1. To convince you that you are obliged frequently to receive this holy Sacrament.

2. To instruct you in the nature and measure of that preparation which is required of all worthy Communicants. And this I shall attempt, for the sake of some honest well-meaning people, who are afraid to come to the Lord's Table, because (as they fancy) they are not duly qualified and prepared.

The measures of which preparation I shall better explain, when I have first given you this brief account of the nature of the Sacrament.





THE
INSTITUTION
OF THE
Holy Communion.

THE institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded by four of the sacred writers, viz. St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke, and St Paul. The sum of what they have delivered concerning it, is thus fully collected by the Church of England, in the prayer of Consecration.

' The Lord Jesus in the same (a) night in
' which he was betrayed, took (b) bread, and
' when he had given (c) thanks he (d) brake
A 3 it

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 23. (b) Matt. xxvi. 26. Mark xiv. 22. Luke xxii. 19. (c) Luke xxii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 24. (d) Matt. xxvi. 26. Mark xiv. 22. Luke xxii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 24.

‘ and gave it to his (a) disciples; (f) saying
 ‘ (g) Take, eat, this is my body, which (h) is
 ‘ given for you, (i) Do this in remembrance of
 ‘ me. Likewise after (k) Supper he took the
 ‘ (l) cup, and when he had given (m) thanks
 ‘ he gave it to them; (n) saying, (o) Drink
 ‘ ye all of this, (p) for (q) this is my blood of
 ‘ the New Testament, which is shed for (r)
 ‘ you, and for (s) many, (t) for the remission
 ‘ of sins: (v) Do this, as oft as ye shall drink
 ‘ it, in remembrance of me.’

From these words of the holy pen-men, it plainly appears; That our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ being immediately to suffer death upon the cross (by which death he was to make a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world) he did then institute, and command us (by receiving bread and wine) *to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death until his coming again.*

So

(e) Matt. xxvi. 26. (f) Luke xxii. 19. (g) Matt. xxvi. 26. Mark xiv. 22. 1 Cor. xi. 24. (h) Luke xxii. 19. (i) Luke xxii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 24. (k) Luke xvii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25. (l) Matt. xxvi. 27. Mark xiv. 23. Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25. (m) Matt. xxvi. 27. Mark xiv. 23. (n) Matt. xxvi. 27. (o) Matt. xxvi. 27. (p) Matt. xxvi. 28. (q) Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25. (r) Luke xxii. 20. (s) Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. (t) Matt. xxvi. 28. (v) 1 Cor. xi. 25.

So that this institution of our Saviour is as formal a command to do what he then did, as any words can express.

It is impossible for any law to be more peremptory and obliging. Neither Prayer, nor Preaching, nor the observation of the Lord's Day, which all acknowledge to be necessary duties, are more plainly required; than, *Take eat, this is my body. --- Drink ye all of this. --- This do in remembrance of me.*

Now that you may give a more chearful obedience to this established law; and that this command may make its due impression upon you, I shall desire you to consider,

1. *Who it is that commands this.*

It is our blessed Lord and Saviour, who hath full power and authority so to do; and that in every respect. Not only as God, [He made us, and preserves us; and so hath just power over the works of his own hands;] but as God-man, as our Mediator and Redeemer, he hath bought us, [hath paid a most valuable price for us, even his own precious blood;] and so we are his by purchase. He hath redeemed us out of the hands of our enemies, and so we are his by conquest. And why are we thus purchased and redeemed? Is it to be our own masters, and do what we list? No: *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. And that being delivered out of the*
A 4
hands

hands of our enemies, ye might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life, Luke i. 7, 8.

But now, How are we his servants? And how do we honour him as our master? How do we glorify him in our bodies and spirits, if we take no notice of his commands?

2. When was it that he thus commanded.

It was (St Paul tells you) the same night in which he was betrayed, that Jesus took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said; Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you: This do in remembrance of me, 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.

It was when he was preparing to die in our stead, and to offer up himself a Sacrifice for us; then it was that he did institute this Sacrament: and by breaking of bread, and drinking of wine, did command us to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death until his coming again.

Now the words of dying men, you know, are sacred, and do usually make great impression upon us. And to deny the last request of any person, though otherwise a stranger [supposing it proper and fit for us to grant] is looked upon as a rude and barbarous practice. But to refuse some easy requests of a dying friend, who hath not only been a great support and comfort to us all the time of his life, but hath also bequeathed us a considerable

estate

estate at his death; such neglect as this were a monstrous ingratitude.

What therefore shall we think of those that forget their dying Lord: And who will not remember his death, that gave them life? And who desires no more from us, but only that we will remember this his love, and behave ourselves with a dutiful Affection to him. To refuse such a command as this, so easy as well as just: not to remember his kindness who dyed for our sakes, is so base and dangerous, it is such a dreadful aggravation of our disobedience and contempt, that I want a name to express it; especially when we consider,

3. What it is that is required of us, when we are commanded, *Do this in remembrance of me.*

Now there are *two* things commanded; the *one* expressed, the *other* implied.

1. *To make a grateful commemoration of his death and passion.*

2. *To partake of all those benefits and blessings which are the effects and consequents of such a remembrance.*

The first general command is, the remembrance of Christ: *This do in remembrance of me.*

It is the noted practice of all civilized nations, to celebrate the memory of their public benefactors. Surely you will then grant, That the blessed Jesus, the greatest benefactor

that ever was, is never to be forgotten by us Christians. But that it is our constant indispensable duty, by eating this bread, and drinking this cup, to shew forth the Lord's death till he come; *i. e.* as the word *καταγγέλλειν* signifies, to publish, and tell it abroad: to profess and declare to all the world, that Christ died for you, and that he purchased you by his blood; and that you now own him to be your Lord, and profess yourselves to be his servants; and that you will be ruled and governed by him, and do what he commands you. In short; By the receiving of this Sacrament, you publickly profess your Religion, and declare yourselves to be Christians.

2. When you come to the Lord's Table, you do not barely remember the death and passion of your blessed Saviour; but you then also come to receive all those benefits and blessings, which are the effects and consequents of such a remembrance. For this institution of the Lord's Supper, is a privilege and blessing, as well as a duty.

Indeed, earthly parents and masters do often command their children and servants *pro imperio*. Such a thing shall be done, though otherwise perhaps of no great moment, because it is their pleasure. And the most rational objection to the contrary shall be silenced, with a *know your duty*, and--*I will be obeyed*. But such is the indulgence of our Lord; such is the gracious disposition of our Master; he never

never commands us any thing, but it is for our advantage: *Do this and live; Do this and be happy*; is the constant language of his precepts. Let us therefore, for our instruction and comfort, more distinctly consider, what particular blessings are conveyed by that holy institution.

All which are contained in this general expression, *of being partakers of his most blessed body and blood*; which, as the Church Catechism instructs us, *are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper*, i. e. *all the faithful*; all who are duly prepared and disposed, they are real partakers, they have a real part and portion given them in the death and sufferings of the Lord Jesus. They do truly and indeed partake of the virtue of his sacrifice, whereby he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. And this certainly is the meaning of those words of St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 16. *The cup of blessing which we bless, Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* i. e. By eating this bread, and drinking this cup, we do not only declare our communion and fellowship with the Church; but we have also communion with Christ himself. We communicate and partake of his body and blood; i. e. all the effects and benefits of his death and passion are imparted and conveyed to us. And what these blessings more particularly are, the Liturgy of our Chuach, in the prayers after the

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the communion, doth thus plainly instruct you.

That those who have duly received these holy mysteries, and are fed with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of Jesus Christ; *They obtain remission of their sins, and are filled with God's grace, and heavenly benediction; they are assured of God's favour and goodness towards them; They are very members, incorporate in the mystical body of Christ; and also heirs through hope of his everlasting kingdom.*

Having given this brief account of the nature of this Sacrament; I now proceed in all faithfulness, to admonish you of your neglect; by shewing how dangerous it is to absent yourselves from the Lord's Table: and in order to your conviction, I shall desire your answer to two plain questions.

1. *Whether the wilful continuance in any one known sin, is not a damning state; and consequently, such a state wherein there is no salvation?*

The Apostle exhorts you to examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; whether you are in a state of grace or no; and you are fully convinced, that it is absolutely necessary so to do. But when it comes to the trial, I have just cause to fear, you content yourselves with very false signs and imperfect marks.

It is very common for men pretending to Religion to make such reflections as these: *What a sad, wicked, debauched age, do we live in: What a litter of idle, swearing, drinking, whoring companions, are amongst us: All this is too sadly true. But what then?*

Observe now what tacit inference is made from this remark.

But I am no such man; I am no swearer; I am no drunkard; I am no whoremonger, &c. All this is very well; and thank God for his restraining grace, that you are not. But what then? *Therefore I am a Saint. Therefore I am in God's favour. Therefore I am in a state of grace.* No such matter. This is but the Pharisee's Religion. *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess. And yet your blessed Saviour assures you: Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

When therefore you do enter upon this great work of self-examination, do not take your measures either from yourselves or other men. Do not say, or think, *I am not so bad as such and such a man, Or, I am not so bad as I myself was in former time; and therefore, I am in a regenerate state.* No! No! This is a very false and imperfect rule. For there are other sins besides fornication, and those deadly sins now mentioned; such as *pride,*
vain-

vain-glory, and hypocrisy; envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. Sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion; false doctrine, heresy, and schism; hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandment. An obstinate continuance in any one of these, as well as swearing and drinking, is a state of damnation: and therefore in examining your spiritual state and condition, I know no rule you can depend upon but this:

That, *An hearty, honest endeavour of obeying the whole will of God, is the only sure and true sign of a state of grace.* And therefore, whoever doth knowingly and wilfully neglect to obey the whole will of God; *i. e.* he who doth wilfully continue in any one known sin; such a man is not in a state of grace; and consequently not in a state of salvation. This being granted, as it cannot be denied; I enquire,

2. *Whether to neglect a plain command of Christ, is not wilfully to continue in a known sin?*

To enforce this, I must desire you to consider, that there are two sorts of sins: of *commission*, and *omission*.

Sins of *commission*, are the doing such things as God has forbidden; as, *to kill, to lie, to steal, to swear, &c.*

Sins of *omission*, are the neglecting to do those things which God hath commanded. As, *not to call upon God; not to honour his holy*

holy name, and his word; not to come to church; not to join in public prayer; not to hear sermons, &c. All these are sins of omission. And pray, Whether is not this institution of the Lord's Supper as express a command as any of the rest? Consequently, to neglect this holy Sacrament, Is it not to be guilty of a wilful sin? And whoever continues in any one known sin, such a man, I have shewed you, is in a state of damnation.

I beseech you seriously to consider these things, which are so very plain and evident, that it is impossible for the meanest capacity not to apprehend them. In short, damnation is for wilful sins. Wilful sins are sins deliberately committed against a known law. And if there be any such thing as a known law amongst Christians, this certainly is one; that they ought to receive the holy Sacrament. The command is peremptory and express; *This do in remembrance of me.* Why then will you not do it? What excuses can possibly be made, why you will not observe so plain a command?

To omit the objections of the *schismatical* and *profane*, there are several honest well meaning people, who thus pretend to excuse their absence from the Lord's Table.

OBJECTION.

WE are fully convinced it is a duty to receive this Sacrament. But who are those who ought to receive it? Is it

“ it not those who have the wedding gar-
 “ ment? that is, are qualified and prepared.
 “ But as for us, we are a labouring, work-
 “ ing people, who have no leisure to examine
 “ ourselves, or to spend whole days or weeks
 “ in fasting and prayer.
 “ Is it not therefore much safer for us to
 “ honour the Sacrament, by keeping at a due
 “ distance; than by coming unprepared to
 “ eat and drink our own damnation?”

This is the objection of many honest
 well-disposed people; whose satisfaction
 shall endeavour in the following

A N S W E R.

IT is a noted truth (sufficiently vindicated
 by the reformers against the Church of
 Rome) that religious duties do neither confer
 grace, nor find acceptance with God *ex opere
 operato*; that is, by the bare doing of the work
 for external acts of worship (such as *prayer*
reading of the scriptures, hearing of sermons
participating of the Sacrament) they do no
 work by way of charm, but in a rational and
 moral way. And though the efficacy of them
 is derived from the divine institution and
 blessing; yet that blessing is only conveyed
 to those persons who are duly qualified and
 disposed to receive it.

It will therefore be a very profitable under-
 taking, distinctly to inform you, what kind of
 prepara

gar- preparation is necessary, in order to the wor-
ared, thy receiving of this holy Sacrament. That
work- is, What must you do ; how must you be-
mine have yourselves, that so you may be accepted
weeks as welcome guests at the Lord's Table ?

us to I must remind you of a two-fold preparation.
a due Or rather to speak more properly, that this
ed to preparation doth admit of a two-fold con-
sideration.

1. *Internal.*

2. *External.*

By *internal* preparation, I denote the ob-
taining and practising those inward graces
whereby the soul doth shew its dependance
upon, and relation to God : as *faith, hope,*
love, charity, sorrow for sins past, and resolu-
tion of future obedience, &c.

By *external* preparation, I denote those ex-
ternal acts of worship, those outward duties,
whereby this inward piety and devotion of
the soul, in the exercise of the forementioned
graces is expressed and cherished : as *prayer,*
reading the holy Scriptures, and other pious
books ; hearing of sermons, private meditation,
self-examination, holy conference with others,
&c.

Now preparation for the holy Communion
supposes both these.

I. The

1. The soul of a worthy communicant must be furnished with divine virtues and graces.

2. These graces must be exercised and improved.

The former is the getting oil in our lamps, the latter is the trimming and dressing our lamps.

The getting oil in our lamps, or grace into our souls, is the work of our whole lives; and must not be deferred to the times and seasons of receiving the Sacrament.

But the trimming of our lamps, or the exercise and strengthening of our graces, by a solemn performance of certain outward duties: as prayer, *serious consideration of the mysterious love of God, expressed and presented to us in this holy Institution, reading of the Scriptures, and other books of devotion; communing with our own hearts in self-examination; and (for the better performance of these, and such like duties) the sequestering of ourselves from secular business, and the retiring from the noise and hurry of the world:* I say, a solemn performance of these duties, immediately before we approach the Lord's Table, is that which we vulgarly call *preparation for the holy Communion.*

Concerning which preparation (to avoid mistakes, and to quiet the minds of honest well-

well-meaning, but weak and injudicious people) I shall premise these following considerations.

1. That in a strict and legal sense, the most solemn preparation of the holiest person is utterly unworthy of the divine favour and acceptance.

It is an insufferable insolence for finite creatures, wretched polluted sinners, to pretend any merit or worthiness of their own to a pure and holy God. We are not worthy of the common mercies even of this life, much less of those spiritual mercies which prepare us for a better. We are not worthy of our daily bread, much less of that bread which came down from heaven. And therefore our Church doth very excellently thus instruct us to acknowledge our unworthiness, before we presume to *eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*:

‘ We do not presume to come to *this thy Table*, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table.’

And in one of the prayers after the communion, the communicants do thus address themselves unto God;

‘ Although

‘ Although we be unworthy through our
 ‘ manifold sins, to offer unto thee any
 ‘ sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept
 ‘ this our bounden duty and service; not
 ‘ weighing our merits, but pardoning our
 ‘ offences.’

From whence you may observe, That the most holy persons, when they approach the Lord’s Table, do then humbly acknowledge that they are utterly unworthy of so great a blessing. After all our care, after all our preparation to qualify ourselves, we must acknowledge, that we are unworthy to pick up the crumbs that fall from our Master’s Table; but much more unworthy to feast at it.

2. Though the best and most solemn preparation is imperfect, yet the holy Communicant must never omit it. Though he dares not be so confident as to be proud of his preparation, nor to challenge acceptance upon that account, yet he must not be so rude and undutiful as to neglect it.

St. Paul doth admonish; *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

3. Though this preparation is so necessary, that we must not presume to approach the
 Lord’s

Lord's Table without some preceding preparation, yet it is very difficult to assign the measures of it, so as precisely to determine how much time must be spent in these private preparatory duties. How much, for instance, in *prayer*, how much in *reading*, how much in meditation, how much in *self-examination*, &c.

In which respect, some devout persons have very needlessly, not to say superstitiously, perplexed themselves; and have been entangled in an apprehension, of a greater necessity than really there is, of a long and solemn preparation every time they receive the Sacrament.

It is true, taking the word preparation for that which I called *internal* preparation, *viz.* inward holiness and conformity to the divine nature: in this sense it is impossible for any man to be worthily and sufficiently prepared. For our graces are imperfect as well as our knowledge. As we know but in part, so we are sanctified but in part. And perhaps there was never any man so worthily prepared, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his mind, and the degree of his preparation.

But now, taking the word preparation for *external* preparation,

For 'the sequestering of ourselves from secular business and diversion; and the spending a certain portion of time in fasting and prayer, in self-examination, &c.'

In

In this sense, the same degree of preparation is not always either necessary in itself nor expected by Almighty God.

1. It is not necessary in itself.

For since a holy life is the truest and justest preparation for this Sacrament, we may safely infer, that those pious persons who are regular in the main of their conversation, and who dare not sleep in the guilt of any known sin; but are careful every night to call themselves to an account for the actions of the preceding day: I say, these prudent and pious persons, when they prepare for the holy Communion, do not need that tedious elaborate examination, which yet may be necessary for careless, extravagant sinners.

When a man's accounts are often reviewed and considered, they are very easily made up and adjusted (as we phrase it) on any solemn occasion. But when the particulars of an account are confused, and have been long neglected, it requires a much longer time to finish such an entangled reckoning, to methodize and put it into order.

The case is the same in spirituals as in temporals, and it is easy for you to make the application. But,

2. As the same degree of preparation is not equally necessary to all sorts of persons so neither is it expected by Almighty God.

As Almighty God is a very kind and gracious, so he is a most just and equal Being. As he doth expect a service and a homage from us, so he always considers the different capacities and circumstances of his creatures: *To whom much is given, of them shall much be required.*

Those whose condition is easy and prosperous, and who have convenient leisure for visits and diversions, of these doubtless God expects a larger portion of time, and a more elaborate preparation.

But as for those who are of a meaner condition, who either sweat for their daily bread, or at least are constrained personally to attend the concerns of their families; doubtless, of these God will accept a shorter time of retirement and devotion than he will from others.

These things premised, I now proceed more particularly to inform you what kind of preparation is necessary in order to the worthy receiving of this holy Sacrament.

WHEN God's minister hath given you notice, that on such a day will be administered the most comfortable Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; then, being returned from the Church immediately retire to your prayers. And therein make an affectionate, humble acknowledgment of the divine wisdom and goodness in the great work

work of man's Redemption. Or, in the words of the exhortation at the communion,
 ' Give most humble and hearty thanks to
 ' God the Father, God the Son, and God the
 ' Holy Ghost; for the Redemption of the
 ' world, by the Death and Passion of our
 ' Saviour Christ.'

And then you must set apart some time in the following week for self-examination. Wherein as your leisure and circumstances will admit, you are ' diligently to try and
 ' examine yourselves, before you presume to
 ' eat of that bread and drink of that cup.'

Concerning which examination, much hath been said in our Manuals of Devotion. But because the rules there given, though otherwise piously designed, are sometimes intricate and perplexing, and have raised unnecessary scruples in the minds of devout, but weak and superstitious people; I shall therefore in all plainness give you my thoughts in this matter.

There are two things which all persons are to examine before they receive the Sacrament;

1. Their *Knowledge*.
2. Their *Practice*.

If you are young Communicants, and have never yet received, then you are to examine,

1. You

I. *Your Knowledge.* You are to examine, Whether you know and understand the nature of this Sacrament. Or in *St. Paul's* language, whether you *discern the Lord's Body*; i. e. Do you know the reason why the sacred Elements are consecrated and set apart? Why the Bread is broken, and the Wine poured out? Do you understand, that this is not done as at a common meal; that the bread is not eaten, nor the wine drank, only for nourishment and refreshing of your bodies; but that the breaking and eating of bread doth signify and represent the breaking and crucifying of Christ's Body; and the pouring out of the wine, the shedding of his Blood? And that by his holy Institution, of thus eating and drinking, are not only signified and represented, but also sealed and confirmed, all those benefits and blessings which are the effects and consequences of his Death and Passion.

Do you apprehend, that this Sacramental eating and drinking, is not only a commemoration of the Death of Christ, for the Redemption of mankind; but also, that it is an evidence of God's reconciliation and favour to us? That our sins are pardoned? That we are in league and amity with him? That we are his friends and favourites? and as such, are admitted to his own Table, to eat of his bread, and to drink of his cup?

B

And

And do you farther understand, that this Sacramental eating and drinking is a means and instrument of conveying grace and strength, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit to the souls of worthy receivers?

If you know thus much, (which is very plain and intelligible) you need not perplex yourselves about your knowledge. But being satisfied in that, you may then proceed,

2. To the examination of your *Practice*.

Wherein you are fully and familiarly instructed in your Church Catechism; in the last question and answer.

‘ Q. What is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper?

‘ A. To examine themselves, whether they
 ‘ repent them truly of their former sins;
 ‘ stedfastly purposing to lead a new life;
 ‘ have a lively faith in God’s mercy through
 ‘ Christ, with a thankful remembrance of
 ‘ his death; and be in charity with all
 ‘ men.’

From which *answer* you may observe, that the worthy Communicant examines himself in these four particulars: 1. His *Repentance*. 2. *Faith*. 3. *Thankfulness*. 4. *Charity*.

1. Repentance is a necessary qualification for the due receiving of this holy Sacrament:

for

for without repentance there is no hope of pardon, or forgiveness of your sins. And it is the very design of this Sacrament, to procure, to convey, and to give assurance of such pardon.

Now the most plain and intelligible account of repentance (and which the meanest capacity may understand) is this :

When a man is convinced that he hath committed a fault, and hath done something amiss, and is then sorry for it ; is ashamed, and grieved, and troubled that he hath done it, and doth heartily wish it had not been done ; and for the future doth not only resolve, but also doth actually amend and reform, so as never more to commit the like : such a man, we truly say, doth repent of such an action.

Thus therefore examine whether your repentance is true or no.

Being retired from the hurry and business of the world, examine your hearts and consider your ways. Call to mind the several passages of your lives ; and then thus say and resolve.

‘ I have indeed thus and thus offended God ; at such a time, in such a manner, and on such an occasion, (--- here confess your several sins) but I am heartily sorry for what I have done. I am perfectly ashamed that I have thus affronted so gracious a God ; such a kind and merciful

B 2

‘ Father.

‘ Father. And if it were to do again,
 ‘ would not do it. I have formerly done
 ‘ very much amiss; but I now stedfastly
 ‘ purpose to lead a new life.’

If you can heartily and sincerely thus feel
 and resolve, you do then truly repent.

2. Examine your *Faith*. Whether you have
 a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ.

Faith in general, is the giving credit to
 thing; or the taking it to be true, upon the
 testimony or authority of such persons as de-
 clare it. And therefore divine Faith is the
 taking or acknowledging a thing to be true
 because God hath told us that it is so.

From hence you may easily apprehend
 What it is to have a lively Faith in God’s
 mercy through Christ. It is in short this:

It is to be firmly perswaded, that if we are
 duly qualified for the divine favour, that God
 will then be gracious and merciful to us for
 the sake of Jesus Christ.

Now, what it is that will thus qualify for the
 God’s mercy and acceptance, I have already
 explained, *viz.*

If you repent you truly of your former
 sins; stedfastly purposing to lead a new life
 you ought then firmly to believe this truth
 That God will pardon those sins, and will
 be merciful to you for the sake of Jesus
 Christ.

The faith

This is that *full trust in God's mercy*, that *quiet conscience*, which the exhortation of the Church tells you is so necessary, that without this no man should presume to come to the Holy Communion.

Now the reason why you ought to have this full trust in God, this lively faith in his mercy through Christ; it is because God, who is immutably true and faithful, hath declared, and plainly told you in his holy word, that those who truly and sincerely repent, they shall certainly have pardon and acceptance. And therefore to doubt of this, and to distrust God's mercy; to say or think,

'My sins are so great and provoking, that though I do repent, though I am sorry for my former sins, though I mourn for my sins, and though I resolve for the future to forsake my sins, yet God will not pardon me; God will not accept me;' Such a distrust as this is directly contrary to a lively faith. 'Tis the highest affront to the merit and satisfaction of our blessed Saviour (who, by his death upon the cross, hath made a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the whole world.) 'Tis the greatest indignity not only to the divine goodness (whose mercy is over all his works) but also to his veracity and truth.

You will believe an honest man upon his word. Do not therefore dare to distrust a faithful God; but say, 'Lord, I believe; help

‘ help thou mine unbelief. I do firmly be-
 ‘ lieve, I am fully perswaded, that if I truly
 ‘ repent, and forsake my sins, God will be
 ‘ merciful to me for the sake of Jesus Christ.’

3. Examine whether you have a *thankful remembrance of his death.*

This thankful remembrance of the death of Christ, is so necessarily required of the worthy communicant, that it is the very end and design of his coming to the Lord’s Table.

In the exhortation at the communion we are admonished;

‘ That these holy mysteries are ordained,
 ‘ to the end that we should always remem-
 ‘ ber the exceeding great love of our Master
 ‘ and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying
 ‘ for us.’

And indeed, without this remembrance, eating of bread, and drinking of wine, would be barely a natural action, but not a sacramental institution.

’Tis then indispensibly required of all those who come to the Lord’s Supper, to remember the death of Christ.

But how are they to remember it? Not only historically, to recollect by way of story, that such a passage did happen at such or such a time. This doubtless is not sufficient, since not only the worst and vilest of men, but
 even

even the very Devils (those knowing, sagacious spirits) do thus remember it: they know, and remember (though indeed to their terror) that seventeen hundred and odd years ago, Jesus of *Nazareth* died upon the cross.

The remembrance then which is required to make us worthy communicants, is a thankful remembrance. That is, we are so to remember our blessed Saviour, as to be sensibly affected with those benefits and blessings we receive by his death.

When therefore you approach the Lord's Table, thus thankfully remember the death of Christ.

I Give most humble and hearty thanks to thee, O God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the Death and Passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man, who did humble himself even to the death upon the cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness, and the shadow of death, that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.

'To thee therefore, O blessed Saviour, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, I will give (as I am most bounden) continual thanks. I submit myself wholly to thy holy will and pleasure, and will study to serve thee in true holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.'

4. *Examine*

4. Examine *whether you are in charity with all men?*

To be in charity with all men, is to be kindly affectionate towards all men; doing them all the good you can, giving and forgiving, as far as your capacity and their circumstances will admit.

Particularly (as the Church doth instruct you) ‘ If you shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other. And being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your offences at God’s hand.’

And when the minister gives warning of communion, he then declares; ‘ That if any be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, that they repent of their sins, or come not to that holy Table.’

From this prudent caution of our Church several pious well-meaning people do make this

O B J E C T

O B J E C T I O N.

I Have received such provocations from such and such persons, that I cannot easily put them out of my mind. And whilst I remember such unkindness, I cannot but think worse of those from whom I have received such injuries. And this occasions me to keep a greater distance from them in conversation; not to be so free and familiar with them as formerly. Much less can I think it prudent, to treat them as particular friends and confidants, by reposing trust in them; or bestowing particular favours upon them. And therefore I doubt I do not love them; I am not in charity with them; and consequently, that I am not prepared for the holy Communion." This is indeed a very popular objection. Which I hope to remove in the following

A N S W E R.

THERE is a two-fold love.

1. A love of complacency or friendship; which disposeth us to desire and delight in the conversation of others.

2. A love of benevolence or compassion; which prompts us to desire and endeavour the benefit of others.

The

The love of complacency, or friendship, is not due to all men. For the Gospel, which commands you to *be harmless as doves*, doth likewise require you to *be wise as serpents*.

Now it is no instance of prudence to take a snake into your bosom, and to treat your enemy as a friend. Or to converse cheerfully, and with freedom, and to communicate your secrets to him, who is false to your interest, and who takes all occasions to slander and affront you, and, were it in his power, designs your ruin.

Since therefore 'tis morally impossible to take delight in the conversation of a captious, designing person; and since it is not prudent to make a false injurious man your friend, you may safely infer you are not obliged to love such an enemy with this love of complacency and friendship.

But besides this love of complacency and friendship, there is a love of benevolence or good-will, which prompts you to desire and endeavour the welfare of all men.

By this love of benevolence, you are obliged to be just to all mankind, and consequently to your very enemies. You must be faithful to them in all your promises, true and sincere in all your speeches, just and punctual in all your dealings. Nor must you pretend, that you have the freedom to falsify and tell lies, to raise calumnies, or report false

false and slanderous stories, even of an enemy; neither may you wrongfully withhold what is due to him, by breaking your promise; nor may you oppress or defraud him.

And as Christian love thinketh no evil, so it inclines you to be doing good.

As you must not abuse your enemy with lies and slanderous stories, so when occasion is offered, you must give him his just commendation; and when it may be for his advantage, must give him a good character, must represent him as fairly as his case will admit. As you must not wrong and injure your enemy by couzenage and fraud (much less by open force, violently detaining what is his) so Christian love doth oblige you to do him right. To help and assist him when he is oppressed, and to relieve him when he is in want. *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head (to melt him down by kindness) and the Lord shall reward thee,* Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

Thus by a love of benevolence and compassion, you are obliged to be in charity with all men. Forgive, nay, love your enemies. Bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

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